

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) A method of preparing a heat-developable image recording material comprising a support, a photosensitive silver halide, a non-photosensitive organic silver salt, a reducing agent for a silver ion, and an emulsion layer comprising a binder comprising a polymer latex,

wherein said method comprises:

a step of desalting an additive containing a halogen ion by electrodialysis using an ion exchange membrane to form a desalted additive,

a step of emulsion polymerizing one or more monomers in the presence of the desalted additive to form the polymer latex with a halogen ion content of not more than 500 ppm, wherein the polymer latex is not subjected to purification using an ion exchange resin or a dialysis membrane, through a desalting step,

a step of forming the emulsion into a layer on a side of the support, said emulsion layer being an image forming layer, to form the heat-developable image recording material.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the halogen ion is a chlorine ion.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the binder has a glass transition temperature of from  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $80^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

6. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the polymer latex contains a conjugated diene copolymer.

7. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the reducing agent contains:

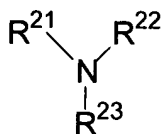
a phenol compound; and

a compound that satisfies at least one of the conditions (A) and (B):

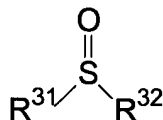
(A) : the compound having a hydrogen bond-forming rate constant ( $K_f$ ) of from 20 to 4,000,

(B) : the compound having one of a phosphoryl group in its molecule, and a structure represented by formula (II),

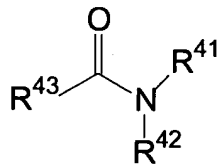
(III), (IV) or (V):



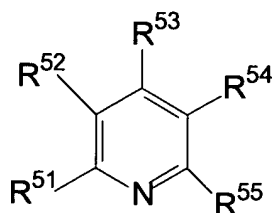
(II)



(III)



(IV)



(V)

wherein R<sup>21</sup> and R<sup>22</sup>, which are the same or different, each represents an alkyl group; R<sup>23</sup> represents an alkyl group, an aryl group or a heterocyclic group; at least two of R<sup>21</sup>, R<sup>22</sup> and R<sup>23</sup> may be combined with each other to form a ring,

R<sup>31</sup> and R<sup>32</sup>, which are the same or different, each represents an alkyl group, an aryl group or a heterocyclic group; R<sup>31</sup> and R<sup>32</sup> may be combined with each other to form a ring,

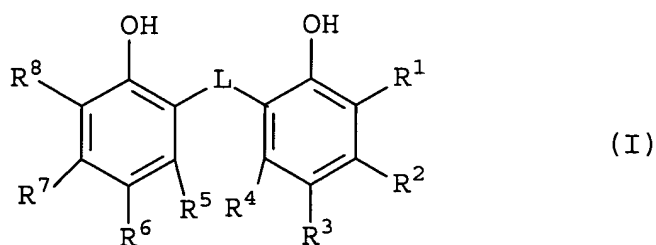
R<sup>41</sup> and R<sup>42</sup>, which are the same or different, each represents an alkyl group, an aryl group or a heterocyclic group; R<sup>43</sup> represents an alkyl group, an aryl group, a heterocyclic group or –N(R<sup>44</sup>)(R<sup>45</sup>); R<sup>44</sup> and R<sup>45</sup>, which are the same or different, each represents an alkyl group, an aryl

group or a heterocyclic group; at least two of  $R^{41}$ ,  $R^{42}$ ,  $R^{43}$ ,  $R^{44}$  and  $R^{45}$  may be combined with each other to form a ring, and

$R^{51}$ ,  $R^{52}$ ,  $R^{53}$ ,  $R^{54}$  and  $R^{55}$ , which are the same or different, each represents a hydrogen atom or a substituent; at least two of  $R^{51}$ ,  $R^{52}$ ,  $R^{53}$ ,  $R^{54}$  and  $R^{55}$  may be combined with each other to form a ring.

8. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 7, wherein the phenol compound is an o-polyphenol compound.

9. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the o-polyphenol compound is a compound represented by formula (I):



wherein  $R^1$ ,  $R^2$ ,  $R^3$ ,  $R^4$ ,  $R^5$ ,  $R^6$ ,  $R^7$  and  $R^8$ , which are the same or different, each represents a hydrogen atom or a substituent capable of being substituted on the benzene ring; L represents –S– or –CHR<sup>9</sup>–; and  $R^9$  represents a hydrogen atom or an alkyl group.

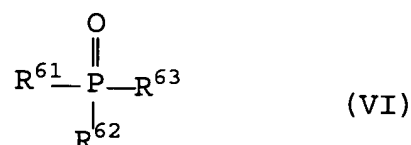
10. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 9, wherein the compound represented by formula (I) is a compound in which  $R^2$ ,  $R^4$ ,  $R^5$  and  $R^7$  each represents a hydrogen atom;  $R^1$  and  $R^8$  each independently represents an alkyl group;  $R^3$  and  $R^6$  each independently represents an alkyl group; and L represents  $-\text{CHR}^9-$ .

11. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 10, wherein  $R^1$  and  $R^8$  each independently represents a secondary alkyl group or a tertiary alkyl group.

12. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 7, wherein the hydrogen bond-forming rate constant (Kf) is from 70 to 4,000.

13. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 7, wherein the phenol compound is an o-polyphenol compound, and the compound which satisfies at least one of the conditions (A) and (B) is the compound having a phosphoryl group in its molecule.

14. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in Claim 7, wherein the compound having a phosphoryl group in its molecule is a compound represented by formula (VI):



wherein  $R^{61}$ ,  $R^{62}$  and  $R^{63}$ , which are the same or different, each represents an alkyl group, an aryl group, an aralkyl group, an alkoxy group, an aryloxy group, an amino group or a heterocyclic group.

15. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein an image-forming layer is formed by combining the photosensitive silver halide, the non-photosensitive organic silver salt and the binder.

16. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 15, wherein the reducing agent for a silver ion is added to the image-forming layer.

17. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 15, further comprising forming a second image-forming layer containing the reducing agent for a silver ion.

18. (Previously Presented) The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the polymer latex has a halogen ion content of not more than 100 ppm.

19. (Currently Amended) A method of preparing a heat-developable image recording material comprising an emulsion layer comprising a binder comprising a polymer latex having a halogen ion content of not more than 500 ppm,

wherein said method comprises:

a step of desalting an additive containing a halogen ion by electrodialysis using an ion exchange membrane to form a desalted additive,

a step of emulsion polymerizing one or more monomers in the presence of the desalted additive to form the polymer latex, wherein the polymer latex is not subjected to purification ~~through a desalting step using an ion exchange resin or a dialysis membrane, and~~

a step of forming the emulsion into a layer on a side of a support, said emulsion layer being an image forming layer, to form the heat-developable image recording material.

20. (Currently amended) The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the ~~polymer latex is formed with additives containing~~ desalted additive contains a halogen ion content of not more than 500 ppm ~~or with additives which have been subjected to a purification step.~~

21. (Currently amended) The method as claimed in Claim 19, wherein the ~~polymer latex is formed with additives containing~~ desalted additive contains a halogen ion content of not more than 500 ppm ~~or with additives which have been subjected to a purification step.~~